

## INTRODUCTION OF "SEARCH ACT OF 2007"

**HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 12, 2007*

Mr. CUMMINGS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to reintroduce the "Servitude and Emancipation Archival Research Clearing House, SEARCH, Act of 2007," a companion to Senator MARY LANDRIEU's bill of the same name, which would establish a national database of historic records of servitude and emancipation in the United States to assist African Americans in researching their genealogy.

Madam Speaker, for most Americans, researching their genealogical history involves searching through municipal birth, death, and marriage records—most of which have been properly archived as public historical documents. However, African Americans in the United States face a unique challenge when conducting genealogical research.

Due to slavery and discrimination, African Americans were denied many of the benefits of citizenship that produce traceable documentation such as voter registration, property ownership, business ownership, and school attendance. As a result, instead of looking up wills, land deeds, birth and death certificates, and other traditional genealogical research documents, African Americans must often try to identify the names of former slave owners, hoping that the owners kept records of pertinent information, such as births and deaths. Unfortunately, current records of emancipation and slavery are frequently inaccessible, poorly catalogued, and inadequately preserved from decay.

Although some States and localities have undertaken efforts to collect these documents with varying degrees of success, there is no national effort to preserve these important pieces of public and personal history or to make them readily and easily accessible to all Americans. While entities such as Howard University and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture Library have extensive African American archives, the SEARCH Act would create a centralized database of these historic records. This database would be administered by the Archivist of the United States as part of the National Archives.

The SEARCH Act would also authorize \$5 million for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission to establish the national database, as well as \$5 million in grants for States and academic institutions to preserve local records of servitude and emancipation.

I believe that this legislation will be a vital step in resurrecting the rich history of African Americans and the vital role that they played in building America. This legislation is not only a means by which African Americans can trace their lineage, but also a means by which our Nation can preserve historically comprehensive and accurate information for generations yet unborn.

Author Maya Angelou once said that "No man can know where he is going unless he knows exactly where he has been and exactly how he arrived at his present place." Let there be no mistake, Madam Speaker, the SEARCH Act will provide African Americans an opportunity to forge a crucial nexus between the

past and the present. Just as important, it will give our Nation an opportunity to continue to correct the unintended consequences of the past.

This Monday marks the anniversary of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, and the day that we as a nation celebrate his legacy. In honor of Dr. King and the contributions he has made, and on behalf of the many African Americans throughout the United States, I urge my colleagues to cosponsor the SEARCH Act.

Join me in ending the horrible legacies of slavery and discrimination by giving African Americans a real chance to understand who they are and from whence they came.

## IN MEMORY OF JUDGE JOHN HAROLD WHITTINGTON

**HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 12, 2007*

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Judge John Harold Whittington of Dallas County, who passed away over the holidays in Irving, Texas due to natural causes.

Mr. John Whittington lived a respectable, accomplished life, and continues to be a political inspiration to many Republican officeholders. When he was elected County Judge in November 1975, he was one of the first Republicans elected to countywide office in Dallas County since Reconstruction. As a Judge, Mr. Whittington was not only dedicated to following the law, but also ensured fairness in that each person's position was heard; those who worked for Judge Whittington had the utmost respect for him. He also had a dry sense of humor that seemed to reduce any tension in the courtroom. Mr. John Whittington was an inspiration as well as a political mentor for many young Republican officeholders.

Born in Bloomington, Indiana, Mr. John Whittington moved with his family to Dallas, Texas as a young child. Growing up, he served as an altar boy at Christ the King Catholic Church and was active in sports at North Dallas High School. He received his Bachelor's degree from Southern Methodist University and his law degree from the University of Texas at Austin. He later enlisted in the Navy, where he served as a gunnery officer and was a boxing champion. Mr. Whittington then served in the Navy Reserve, retiring as a captain. After moving back to Dallas, he was continuously active in the community by working for the Veterans Administration's legal department, the City Council, as mayor (pro tem), and for the Dallas County Commissioners Court, after which he served as County Judge. Having a full career, Judge Whittington leaves an exceptional legacy.

John Harold Whittington is survived by his wife, Margaret Whittington, son, Mark Whittington, three daughters, Lynne Whittington, Jeanne Ann Whittington, and Maria Malcolm, and four grandchildren, Stephen Whittington, Patrick Whittington, Liza Jane Malcolm, and Evan Malcolm. In addition to his role as a devoted and respected Judge, he will forever be remembered as a loving husband and father, loyal colleague and friend, and a dignified citizen of this country. I

extend my sincerest sympathies to his family and friends. Mr. John Whittington will be deeply missed and his service to our community will always be greatly appreciated.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.**

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 12, 2007*

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I regret that I was unavoidably absent yesterday afternoon, January 11, on very urgent business, having joined President Bush in his visit to Ft. Benning, which, as you know is located in my district. Had I been present for the three votes which occurred yesterday afternoon, I would have voted "aye" on H. Res. 15, rollcall vote No. 21; I would have voted "aye" on H.R. 3, rollcall vote No. 20; I would have voted "no" on H.R. 3, rollcall vote No. 19.

## IRAQ AND EMBASSY

**HON. CORRINE BROWN**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, January 12, 2007*

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today regarding the President's folly in Iraq.

Folly is not the right word. Better words would be disaster, catastrophe, tragedy. The folly is the new embassy the United States is building in Baghdad.

The embassy complex—21 buildings on 104 acres, is the size of Vatican City and will be the largest in the world. It will employ over 5500 people.

Currently, there are 1,000 people who work in the U.S. Embassy in Iraq.

However, only 33 are Arabic speakers and Only six speak the language fluently.

The Iraq Study Group said that "our efforts in Iraq, military and civilian, are handicapped by Americans' lack of knowledge of language and cultural understanding."

"In a conflict that demands effective and efficient communication with Iraqis, we are often at a disadvantage."

The U.S. government should give "the highest possible priority to professional language proficiency and cultural training" for officials headed to Iraq.

Who do we send?

Over twenty thousand new military personnel.

The embassy's 104 acres is six times larger than the United Nations compound in New York and two-thirds the acreage of Washington's National Mall.

The embassy will cost over 1 billion, One billion, dollars.

It will be self-sufficient, designed to function in the midst of Baghdad power outages, water shortages and continuing turmoil.

It will have its own water wells, electricity plant and wastewater treatment facility, "systems to allow 100 percent independence from city utilities."

It includes two major diplomatic office buildings, homes for the ambassador and his deputy, and six apartment buildings for staff.